

MY POOR WIFE.

BY J. P. SMITH.

(Continued from last Saturday.)

CHAPTER VII.

At first she was icy indignant at my intrusion; but, when she learned the nature of my errand, her manner thawed, and with flattering affability she gave me to understand that I could take her beloved grandchild to wife as soon as ever I liked—even suggested, though somewhat doubtfully, that I should wait to be supplied with a companion tumbler of negus, in celebration of the solemn betrothal, which hospitality I curtly declined; and, after a few whispered words with Helen, who seemed quite dazed or stupefied, I began my long walk home in a turmoil of tenderness, triumph and irritation that was little in harmony with the glorious stillness of the moonlit ocean and cliffs.

I awoke the next morning after a restless night with the comforting consciousness that I had made an unmitigated fool of myself, tied myself for life to a girl of no position, education, fortune, even beauty, for whom in cold blood I really did not care a straw, while my heart was irretrievably bound to another.

I wandered about the mountains alone all day, and in the afternoon turned towards the farm, but when it came within view a feeling of impatient repulsion made me turn back at once. That night I wrote a short note to Helen, telling her I had to go to England on business, and on the following day I crossed the channel.

General Stopford and his niece, I heard, were occupying their town house for a few weeks. I did not call on them, but the day after my arrival I had the pleasure of meeting Miss Stopford in the row, looking the picture of blooming health and beauty, my rival in devoted attendance.

She called me at once to her side and in an imploring whisper begged me to come and see her that afternoon, that she would be at home to no one but me, and had so much to say to me. I refused point-blank, and took my leave almost at once, determined never voluntarily to come within range of her appealing eyes again. Yet, somehow, the very next day found me on the general's doorstep, asking if his niece were at home.

I was ushered into a dim boudoir, and, when my eyes became accustomed to the light, I saw the young lady sitting beside Lord Sandmouth's son, and toying with a bunch of roses that he had evidently just presented.

"I beg your pardon," I said, with a low bow, as the pair started to their feet. "I think I have made a mistake; it was yesterday afternoon you were to have been 'at home' and alone to me, Miss Stopford, was it not?"

I went away, wrote immediately to Mrs. Casey urging her to hasten the preparations for our marriage. Three weeks later I returned to Donegal, and one lovely August morning, without settlements, trousseau, presents or the orthodox breakfast, I was married in the whitewashed parlor where I had first seen my bride less than three months before with her apron full of early potatoes.

The ceremony was uneventful until the conveyance that was to take us to the train came lumbering and jolting up the grassy drive, and Helen rose to say good-by to her grandmother.

"You—you will write to me, and let me see you sometimes, granny?" she said timidly, with a slight break in her voice.

"Certainly, if you earnestly wish it, dear child," answered Mrs. Casey, brushing the girl's cheek with her bristly chin; "but at the same time, Helen, I have been thinking seriously over this matter, and have come to the conclusion that it would be better if you did not return to the humble scene of your childhood, for reasons you will understand later. You are entering into a world of pleasure, wealth, excitement; I am passing away here, in solemn undisturbed communion with my Creator. My days are short on earth, as you know, and I would rather not have them broken into by intercourse with a world I have forsaken forever. You must not, dear child, think this decision harsh or unnatural, or that it is dictated by lack of affection for you. No, no, far from it; I will bear you daily in my thoughts, and pray with all the unctious of my soul that you may be happy and prosperous in your new state of life and worthy in every way of the estimable gentleman in whose keeping I place you with unbounded confidence today."

I bowed low to hide a grim smile, for, indeed, I might have been the sorriest scamp that ever took a wife, for aught the old lady knew to the contrary; and, my wife, with a composed, almost callous countenance, responded, moving to the door—

"So be it, granny; let this be good-by forever, then."

On the doorstep Molly was waiting to fling her arms around her nurse-child in a noisy embrace; and as we lumbered down the hill her shrill blessings, mingled with the rattle of hobnailed heels and handfuls of rice striking the back of the carriage, made a deafening noise.

When it was over I withdrew my hands from my ears and said to my

wife, who was looking out of the window—

"Well, Helen, how do you feel? It was not such a terrible business after all, was it?"

CHAPTER VIII.

She turned round. I saw that her eyes were gleaming, her cheeks burning.

"You heard her, you saw her?" she cried bitterly. "She was so glad to get rid of me, she could not bear the idea of looking upon me again—she, my mother's mother, with whom I have lived all my life. What is there in me, I wonder, that makes me such an unbearable burden to every one? When I had the fever years ago, she—she prayed that I might die. I wish I had—I wish I had. Now, they are all relieved, overjoyed, that you—you have been tricked into marrying me—every one of them, Biddy, Mike, even Molly, who—who I thought cared a little for me. Oh, I—"

"She does care for you," I broke in soothingly. "And so do I, Helen—you know that well. Why else should I have married you?"

"I don't know—I don't know," she answered wildly. "You had some good reason, I feel; and, though you fancy you care a little for me now, it will wear away, and you will long to get rid of me like the rest. I wish I had never met you. I wish I had never been born—there's no one cares for me in the world but little Jim, and he has no sense—my little Jim, whom I—I am never to see again, though you promised, Mr. Denny, that he and I were never to be parted—you—did you know you did?"

"My dear, why did you not bring him with you? You know I would not have objected. Let us turn back and get him at once."

I leaned out to tell the driver to turn, when I saw the poor little dog, with his tongue hanging out, covered with dust, ambling feebly after us. I picked him up and laid him in his mistress' arms, and left them for a time to whisper their grievances to one another. Presently Helen touched me gently, and I saw the storm had gone out of her face. She said wistfully—

"I'm sorry I said what I did, Mr. Denny. Will you forgive me, please, and—and try to be kind to poor little Jim and me?" When I had made the most suitable answer I could think of she added: "When—when you are really tired of us you will let us know, and we'll go away quietly and never trouble you again."

We remained abroad for five months, for I was anxious to rub off the surface-coat of my wife's rusticity before bringing her under the critical eyes of my friends.

I must say the undertaking was not a painful or tedious one by any means. Somehow the lace ruffles and bangles fitted her little brown wrists more naturally than I imagined. She learned quickly and aptly, and, much to my surprise, showed an innate capability of discerning worth and beauty in the higher branches of art which culture had failed to awaken in me. In a picture gallery she would instinctively go to the best picture, stand entranced before canvases from which my eye and, indeed, the average eye of our fellow-travelers would turn away in dull weariness.

She was very observant and intelligent, never required to be told a thing twice, and in a very short time of wedded intimacy learned to read the meaning of every light and shade that crossed my common-place countenance, the very thoughts of my heart—in a manner that startled me at first, until I came to accept it as an ordinary accomplishment, not without its advantages to one of my torpid temperament. The thing I had been longing lazily for I would find somehow at my elbow as soon as she entered the room, the words I would wish said would drop naturally from her lips, the people I liked would be her friends at the end of the week.

By degrees it began to pleasantly dawn upon me that I was getting some return for the great sacrifice I had certainly made in marrying her, and the sense of irritation at being duped that had at first pursued me wore away until I forgot its very existence. Helen made me comfortable, and her happy smiling face and gradually improving looks brought me a feeling of self-approbation that I thoroughly enjoyed, and that certainly smoothed my temper, so sorely tried during my first unfortunate love affair. I accepted her attention, her cheerful devotion as my due, now and then rewarding her with a kind word or a loving caress.

"Clever child!" I remember murmuring one day, when, erratically putting forth my hand, it alighted on the cigar case and the newspaper for which I had been wishing. "How do you always guess?"

"Love teaches me, I suppose," she replied, with a rosy smile. "You remember I had a great quantity of that article in stock when you appeared, and you asked me for all I had in a lump, Paul."

How much a love she received from me in return I did not try to find out, never troubling myself with sentimental analysis of the kind after my marriage until we returned to Col-worth, and I found Edith still unwedded and unwon, more beautiful

than ever, the hand of friendship gracefully outstretched to my wife and little glances of semi-sarcastic, semi-wistful reproach for me whenever our eyes met unobserved.

CHAPTER IX.

This evening, when Edith had called upon my wife was the first time she had ever suggested or seemed to wish for a private interview, and the circumstance disturbed and excited me more than I liked. When at last, after a long delay, she came down the walk, I rose instinctively to meet her, and tried to give to the interview as cold and business-like a tone as I could command.

"What must you think of me, Paul?" she began impulsively. "But I had no resource left to me but to ask you to meet me here. You—you are the only friend—look about me as anxiously as I can—to whom I dare turn for pity and help in a great danger that threatens me, to whom I dare trust a secret that weighs—oh, so heavily—upon my life. You once here, on this spot, told me you loved me dearly—that that love is, of course, dead now; but to its memory—how dear and precious to me, you will never know—I now appeal when I implore you to share my secret and give me the help without which I shall sink. Ah, you will pity and forgive me when you know all! Hear me, dear Paul, friend of my youth, I beseech you!"

Prudence, loyalty to poor Helen, who believed in me so implicitly, distrust of myself, twenty other considerations urged me to refuse her request; but her little hot hands were grasping mine, her lovely blue eyes full of entreaty fixed upon my face. I had bent my head, she whispered her secret into my ear. It was a secret that startled and pained me, more than I could have believed possible, that filled me with indignation and pity, made me promise her my most devoted unconditional allegiance, and, kneeling by her side, beg forgiveness for my harsh judgment and cruel words to her a year before. Poor, poor child, if I only could have guessed!

Up and down the walk I paced for fully ten minutes battling with my wrath and agitation, until her anxious face recalled me to the necessity for prompt and cautious action; and taking my place beside her we talked together for fully half an hour in earnest whispers and discussed the most available measures for averting the threatened danger. When we rose to part at last, she laid her hand on my arm with a piteous gesture.

"I have trusted you; you will not betray me? You will give me your solemn word of honor to tell no one, not even your wife, for she does not like me?"

"What an idea!" I burst out impulsively. "How could you imagine such a thing, Edie? Why, she is always praising you, admiring your beauty, your grace, your cleverness, wondering how I escaped falling in love with—"

I stopped abruptly, coloring furiously, whilst a lovely wave of carmine brightened her cheek. After a painfully conscious pause, during which we did not dare look at one another, she said softly, withdrawing her hand, which I had been unwittingly holding—

"You will find I'm right; she does not like me, Paul, indeed."

"Why, Edie?"

"How should I know?"—twisting her rings slowly round and looking down. "I—I have tried to be nice to her, to make a friend of her; but it's of no use, she will never like me. I'm sure I can't guess why—can you, Paul?"—with a swift upward glance into my uneasy face.

Of course I knew then she was and always had been an unblemished angel, an innocent and shamefully injured girl, that she had never wilfully meant to make sport of my affections or of any other man's. But, lacking this knowledge, I must confess that glance and that appeal in the circumstances would have savored to me of coquetry—of a spirited and dangerous kind. Poor child, how little I understood her—how coarse and merciless had been my judgment!

"I've never done her any harm that I know of, I'm sure; and people don't as a rule find it so very hard to like me, Paul," she added, with a childish wistful sigh.

"They don't, heaven knows they don't!" I muttered, moving hastily away.

"Good-by, Paul—good-by, brother. I may call you that?" she whispered, laying her hand on my arm, detaining me. "Oh, if you had not gone away—if you had not left me—left me—"

"Hush, hush!" I broke in thickly, covering her hot hand with kisses. "We—we must not think of these things now, Edie."

Half way across the lawn I met my wife strolling languidly towards me. "Where have you been?" she asked, with a slight frown. "I have been looking for you everywhere—round by the paddock, stables, garden."

"Not around by the cedar walk, my love."

"Oh, you were there?"

"Yes; smoking a couple of cigars for the last hour or so since I left the drawing-room."

"Then you must have met Miss Stopford going home; she left me nearly an hour ago."

"Miss Stopford—Edie? Let me see. Yes, of course I met her! What a lovely evening it is! Suppose we take a turn by the river before dinner?" I suggested hastily; and, she assenting, we turned towards the wood that bordered my property south and west, watered by the briskest, clearest trout stream in Yorkshire, fringed with fern, forget-me-not and moss-covered boulders, against which the water fretted musically, and breaking into bubbling cascades drowning

the voice of wood pigeon, blackbird, and thrush that haunted the hazel thickets through which Helen was dutifully breaking a way for me.

"What a hurry it is in this evening—worse than ever!" she remarked, when we stood arm in arm by the water. "You stupid, stupid little stream to be in such a fume to reach that foul, smoky town! Don't you feel you're well off, hemmed in by these fragrant banks, serenaded by thrush and blackbird, bedded with sparkling pebbles?"

About a mile further down the little Col, swelled by some tributary streams of baser origin, lost its crystal identity and, after being mercilessly scourged and threshed by the spokes of mighty machinery, passed through the manufacturing town of Shorton and, flowing eastward in a porter-colored flood, emptied itself into the German ocean.

"Yes," I assented, languidly throwing myself upon the grass and lighting a cigar. "It does seem in a confounded hurry; look, Nell, at that beech leaf, what a rate it's traveling at, by Jove!"

"I wonder if it will reach the sea tonight—height!" mused Helen, who never could look at the fairest streak of fresh water without longing for salt.

"Reach the sea tonight—that leaf! You silly girl! Nell, would you like to hear a story?"

"Yes, if it's a pretty one."

"It's all in a minor key, like most true tales. Sit down beside me and I'll begin. Once upon a time there lived up in that red house where you and I, I trust, my dear, will grow gray together, a young lady named Cecily Denny."

"Oh, it's a family legend?"

"Yes; Miss Cecily was my great-grand-aunt, and a famous beauty in her time. I have a miniature of her somewhere, I must show it to you. She had a score or so of lovers and suitors of all ages and degrees, among them some of the most eligible bachelors in the county. The eldest son of the duke, a most gallant and polished gentleman, proposed to her; but she would have no one but young Ronald Henshaw of the Grange below—that stone house among the trees, where we called the other day—a man whom her parents and friends most sensibly disapproved of, for young Ronald had an evil reputation, and had squandered a large slice of the property after he came of age."

"(To Be Continued next Saturday.)"

Atlanta & New Orleans Short Line.

Atlanta & West Point RAILROAD COMPANY.

—AND— the Western Ry. of Ala.

THE SHORT LINE BETWEEN ATLANTA AND NEW ORLEANS.

Operate Magnificent Vestibuled Trains between Atlanta and Montgomery, Mobile and New Orleans, at which intermediate points close and direct connections are made for

All Texas, Mexico and California Points.

In addition to this Excellent Through Train and Car Service These Railroads offer most favorable accommodations and inducements to their patrons and residents along their line. Any one contemplating a change of home can find no location more attractive nor more conducive to prosperity than is to be found on the line of these roads.

"THE HEART OF THE SOUTH"

A beautifully illustrated book giving detailed information as to the inducements and attractions along these lines, can be had upon application to the undersigned, who will take pleasure in giving all desired information.

B. F. WYLY, JR., R. E. LUTZ, Gen. Pass. & Ticket Agt. Traffic Mgr., ATLANTA, GA. MONTGOMERY, ALA.

GEORGE C. SMITH, Pres. & Gen. Manager ATLANTA, GA.

THE DENVER ROAD

Tourists' Favorite Route to Colorado, The "Human Repair Shop of America."

The Successful Business Man

Spends the hot months in the Mountains.

The Club Woman

who wishes to be recognized as authority on today's literature will summer at the Texas-Colorado Chautauqua. She will have her associates the literary cream of the United States.

The Teacher,

admired most by the School Board, will keep up-to-date in school methods and vigorous in body by spending each vacation at Chautauqua Summer School.

The Chautauqua opens at Boulder July 4th, and continues six weeks.

For free Chautauqua literature address D. B. KEELER, Traffic Manager

—OR— A. A. GLISSON, Gen. Agt. Pass. Dept., Ft. Worth & Denver City Ry., Ft. Worth, Texas.

OLD... TRAVELERS

always use the Luxurious Service of the Queen & Crescent Route

the Short Line to the EAST AND NORTH.

THROUGH SLEEPERS... Shreveport to Chattanooga.

PULLMAN BUFFET SLEEPERS New Orleans to New York

Cincinnati and St. Louis.

T. M. HUNT, GEO. H. SMITH, TRAV. PASS. AGT., GEN'L PASS. AGT., DENVER, CO. ST. LOUIS, MO.

Mineral Wells, Texas.



WHY SMITH LEFT HOME....

Because he could live better, cheaper, with better health and less annoyance than he could at home. "Within one day's ride of El Paso" he read in the daily paper—the next day found him at Mineral Wells, the famous Health and Summer Resort, with hotels offering unexceptionable accommodations at reasonable rates, picturesque summer cottages within reach of everybody's purse, health-giving waters, and happy environs. "All summer excursion rates via T. & P.," read those at home, and they follow Mr. Smith.

For descriptive pamphlet, or any further information call on, or address: B. F. DARRBYSHIRE, R. W. CURTIS, S. W. P. A., El Paso, T. P. A., El Paso, E. F. TURNER, G. P. A., Dallas.

"No Trouble to Answer Questions."



SOUTHERN PACIFIC

"Sunset Route"

DOUBLE DAILY TRAIN... New Orleans and Galveston
SERVICE WITH BUFFET... San Antonio and Galveston
SLEEPERS.....

Only Standard Gauge Line Running Through Sleepers to the City of Mexico.

—Night and Morning Connections at New Orleans With Lines to—
NEW YORK, PHILADELPHIA, WASHINGTON, ATLANTA, CINCINNATI, ST. LOUIS, MEMPHIS, AND CHICAGO.

For further information call on Local Agent, or address: C. W. BEIN, Traffic Manager, Houston, Tex. L. J. PARKS, G. P. & T. A., Houston, Tex.

—A GLANCE AT—

THE MAP

OF MEXICO will show you that the MEXICAN CENTRAL RY. reaches all of the important points of Mexico. The table land of Mexico traversed in its entirety by

Mexican Central Ry.

offers most desirable resorts for the summer (as well as for winter) notably Guadalajara, Lake Chapala, Aguascalientes, which are high and dry; where every day in the year is pleasant and every night cool.

Sunshine and Strawberries Every Day in the Year

For rates and other information, apply to B. J. KUHN, Commercial Agent, El Paso, Texas.



EL PASO & NORTHEASTERN

ALAMOGORDO & SACRAMENTO MOUNTAIN RYS.

TIME TABLE NO. 2.

[Mountain Time]

Train No. 1 leaves El Paso... 10:30 a. m.

Train No. 2 arrives El Paso... 7:15 p. m.

(Daily Except Sunday)

Train No. 1 ar. Alamogordo... 2:45 p. m.

Train No. 2 lv. Alamogordo... 3:20 p. m.

(Daily Except Sunday)

Connects at Alamogordo with stage line to Nogales, Mesclero, Ft. Stanton & White Oaks

No one should leave Alamogordo without making a trip on the...

ALAMOGORDO & SACRAMENTO MOUNTAIN RY.

—THAT FAMOUS—

"CLOUD CLIMBING ROUTE"

—And Cool Off at—

"Cloudcroft"

The Breathing Spot of Southwest.

For information of any kind regarding the railroads or the country adjacent thereto, call on or write to

Alfred H. Alexander, GEN. Supt. & GEN. F. & P. AGT.

Or H. Alexander, Asst. G. & P. Agt.

Pecos Valley-Northeastern Railway Company.

CENTRAL TIME.

TRAIN 1.

Lv's Pecos 3:30 a. m. Arrives Eddy 7:35 a. m.

" Roswell 11:55 p. m. Eddy 6:25 "

Amario 9:40 "

Connecting with A. T. & S. F. and F. W. & P. C. Ry's.

TRAIN 2.

Lv's Amario 5:35 a. m. Ar's Roswell 2:35 p. m.

Eddy 6:25 "

Pecos 10:50 "

Connecting with Texas and Pacific Ry.

—STAGES FOR—

Lincoln - White Oaks,

and Nogal, N. M.,

Leave Roswell, N. M., daily except Sunday, at 7 a. m.

For low rates, for information regarding the resources of this valley, the price of lands, etc., apply to

D. H. NICHOLS, Gen. Manager, Eddy, N. M.

DON D. DONAHUE, Gen. Fr't and Pass. Ag't, Eddy, N. M.

IF YOU WOULD TRAVEL to the EAST, NORTH or SOUTHEAST in comfort, purchase your tickets via the



The "BEST TIME," the "BEST SERVICE," and the "BEST connections are assured."

The only line operating PARLOR CAFÉ CARS (meals a la carte).

Pullman Sleepers, Elegant Wide Vestibuled FREE Chair Cars.

THE BEST ROUTE

... TO ...

Memphis, Louisville, Cincinnati, Nashville, Chattanooga, Atlanta, New York, Washington, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and other cities of the North, East and Southeast.

For maps, time tables and other information, write your nearest Cotton Belt Agent, or

S. G. WARNER, D. M. MORGAN, Gen'l Pass. & Ticket Agt., Traveling Pass. Agent, TYLER, TEX. FT. WORTH, TEX.

IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE.

For the North and East,

Via

MEMPHIS OR ST. LOUIS,

In Pullman Buffet Sleeping Cars.

This is the Short and Quick Line, And

HOURS ARE SAVED

By Purchasing Your Tickets via this Route.

For further information, apply to Ticket Agents of Connecting Lines, or to

J. C. Lewis, Traveling Pass. Agent, Austin, Tex.

H.